

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7957
INFO AMEMBASSY MADRID
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
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AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY TUNIS
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GERMANY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 ALGIERS 0371

CINCEUR FOR POLAD

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, US, AG
SUBJ: U.S.-ALGERIAN RELATIONS: AMBASSADOR'S OBSERVATIONS

1. SUMMARY: SINCE AMBASSADOR'S ARRIVAL HERE LAST SUMMER, THERE HAS BEEN BOTH GOOD AND BAD NEWS IN U.S.-ALGERIAN RELATIONS. ON POSITIVE SIDE, ECONOMIC RELATIONS REMAIN LARGE, INTEREST IN CULTURAL COOPERATION GROWS, AND ALGERIAN INSISTENCE ON "NORMAL RELATIONS" WITH US CONTINUES. AT SAME TIME, UNCERTAIN FUTURE OF PENDING LNG CONTRACTS, ALGERIAN "STEADFASTNESS" IN MIDDLE EAST, AND OUR DIFFERENCES WITH GOA ON INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM ARE PROBLEMS, AND CONTINUED BAD NEWS ON THESE FRONTS COULD COINCIDE WITH POSTPONEMENT OF BOUMEDIENE VISIT TO U.S., ARMS SALES TO MOROCCO, AND ABANDONMENT OF CULTURAL ACCORD TO PROVOKE SEVERE DOWNTURN IN OUR RELATIONS.

2. DESPITE ALGERIA'S SEMMINGLY ENDLESS ESPOUSAL OF UNHELPFUL FOREIGN
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POLICY POSITIONS, WE SHOULD AVOID TENDENCY TO WRITE THIS COUNTRY OFF. INSTEAD, WE SHOULD CONTINUE TO TAKE OUR ALGERIAN CONNECTION INTO ACCOUNT AS WE MAKE DECISIONS. PURSUIT BY BOTH SIDES OF NORMAL RELATIONS DURING PAST YEAR HAS REDUCED ALGERIAN SUSPICION OF US, STRENGTHENED HAND OF MODERATES IN THIS COUNTRY, AND PERHAPS LOWERED SOMEWHAT THE LEVEL OF REGIME'S MILITANCY. TO APPEAR TO ABANDON OUR INTEREST IN GOOD RELATIONS WILL HEIGHTEN ALGERIAN

XENOPHOBIA AND SENSE OF ISOLATION, REDUCE NEEDED ACCESS TO THIS REGIME, AND SET BACK CAUSE OF MODERATES WITHIN SOCIETY. END SUMMARY

3. WITH MY SECOND CALENDAR YEAR HERE NOW WELL BEGUN, I AM SETTING DOWN MY VIEWS ON THE CURRENT STATE OF U.S.-ALGERIAN RELATIONS, AND ON THEIR LIKELY FUTURE COURSE.

4. THE RECENT PAST: WHEN I ARRIVED HERE IN JUNE OF LAST YEAR, THE EFFORTS OF THE DEPARTMENT AND OF THIS EMBASSY TO CONVINCE THE ALGERIAN REGIME THAT WE MEANT IT NO HARM HAD BEGUN TO BEAR FRUIT. THE GOA HAD PROFESSED AN INTEREST IN A NORMAL RELATIONSHIP ACROSS THE BOARD IN MARKED CONTRAST WITH THEIR POSITION IN 1974 WHEN THE PREVAILING MESSAGE FROM MFA OFFICIALS WAS THAT THERE COULD BE "BUSINESS", BUT NEVER "COOPERATION," WITH THE U.S. BY SENDING AN AMBASSADOR TO WASHINGTON, PUSHING FOR SIGNATURE OF A CULTURAL AGREEMENT, AND ACCEPTING MEDICAL TEAM, AND NATIONAL WAR COLLEGE VISITS, THE REGIME WAS MOVING TO NORMALIZE THIS RELATIONSHIP.

5. THE ENSUING HALF YEAR HAS BROUGHT BOTH GOOD AND BAD NEWS FOR U.S.-ALGERIAN RELATIONS. IN THE CULTURAL DOMAIN, THE ALGERIAN INTEREST IN BROADENING RELATIONS GENERALLY, AND IN SIGNING THE CULTURAL ACCORD IN PARTICULAR, IS STRONG. THE NUMBER OF ALGERIAN STUDENTS IN THE U.S. CONTINUES TO GROW. FURTHER, EVENTS SUCH AS THE VISIT TO THE U.S. THIS SUMMER OF THE GRADUATING CLASS OF THE NATIONAL SCHOOL OF ADMINISTRATION, THE COOPERATIVE PROGRAM PLANNED BETWEEN THE MEDICAL SCHOOLS OF ALGIERS AND WISCONSIN/MADISON, AND ALGERIAN CONFIDENTIAL

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PLANS TO RECRUIT AMERICAN COLLEGE TEACHERS, SHOULD STRENGTHEN OUR CULTURAL TIES. THERE IS ALSO INTEREST IN HIGH PLACES IN THE REGIME IN REESTABLISHING A U.S. ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING PROGRAM AS PART OF ALGERIA'S EFFORT TO DEVELOP ENGLISH AS A WORKING LANGUAGE HERE.

6. OUR ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIP REMAINS LARGE AND IMPORTANT TO BOTH SIDES. WHILE THERE HAVE BEEN NO STARTLING NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN THIS AREA SINCE MY ARRIVAL, WE CONTINUE TO MAKE PROGRESS. LNG WILL SOON BE SHIPPED UNDER THE EL PASO I CONTRACT, AND OTHER PROJECTS CONTINUE TO MOVE ALONG DESPITE DELAYS THAT ARE PREDICTABLE AND UNAVOIDABLE IN THE ALGERIAN ENVIRONMENT. THE ALGERIANS' INTEREST IN AGRICULTURAL COOPERATION REMAINS, AND THE AGRICULTURAL AGREEMENT NOW UNDER CONSIDERATION IN WASHINGTON COULD MARK A BEGINNING IN THIS FIELD. SIMILARLY, THE APPROXIMATELY 2 BILLION DOLLAR LOAN EXPOSURE HERE OF THE EXIM BANK AND AMERICAN COMMERCIAL BANKS CONTINUES TO GROW AND CANNOT BE IGNORED.

7. IN MORE GENERAL TERMS, THE CLIMATE OF OUR RELATIONS HAS IMPROVED, AND OUR ACCESS AT ALL LEVELS OF THE GOVERNMENT HAS INCREASED SIGNIFICANTLY. MEMBERS OF MY STAFF WHO WERE HERE WHEN THINGS WERE OTHERWISE ARE IMPRESSED AND ENCOURAGED BY THE WILLINGNESS OF MINISTERS

AND PRESIDENTIAL ADVISORS TO RECEIVE ME (AND EVEN SOCIALIZE INFORMALLY) AND AT THEIR OWN INCREASED CONTACTS INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE GOVERNMENT. THE REGIME HAS LOST MANY OF ITS COMPLEXES ABOUT THE U.S., AND IS AT LEAST WILLING TO HEAR OUR SIDE OF THE STORY, BOTH IN FORMAL DEMARCHES AND IN LESS FORMAL (AND SOMETIMES MORE VALUABLE) EXCHANGES OF VIEWS. THE MORE RELAXED ENVIRONMENT HAS ENABLED US TO GET INTO CONTACT WITH ELEMENTS OF THE SOCIETY HERE WHICH ARE FRIENDLY TO THE UNITED STATES AND THE WEST, AND HAS ENCOURAGED THE LATENT PRO-WESTERN SYMPATHIES OF OTHERS. WHILE IT IS EASY TO EXAGGERATE GAINS IN THIS AREA, I BELIEVE WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO INCREASE OUR OWN INFLUENCE SOMEWHAT AND PERHAPS EVEN TO ADVANCE THE CAUSE OF THOSE WHO SEE THINGS OUR WAY.

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8. AT THE SAME TIME, THERE ARE A NUMBER OF ISSUES THAT COULD POSE MAJOR PROBLEMS FOR THIS IMPROVED RELATIONSHIP:

A. THE MIDDLE EAST: SEVERAL YEARS OF ALGERIAN NON-INVOLVEMENT IN THE MIDDLE EAST PROBLEM ENDED ABRUPTLY WITH THE TRIPOLI AND ALGIERS "STEADFASTNESS" CONFERENCES AND BOUMEDIENE'S TRIP THROUGH THE MIDDLE EAST. WE ARE ANALYZING WHAT WE SEE AS BOUMEDIENE'S MOTIVES FOR THIS CHANGE IN POLICY IN A SEPARATE MESSAGE. SUFFICE IT TO SAY HERE THAT HE SAW IT AS A GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY TO REBUILD HIS PRESTIGE IN THE ARAB WORLD (AT SADAT'S EXPENSE, OF COURSE) AND TO DRUM UP SUPPORT ON THE SAHARA IN RELUCTANT ARAB QUARTERS. AS WE HAVE BEEN

REPORTING, THE REGIME HAS BEEN AT PAINS TO TRY TO KEEP ITS NEW POLICY FROM AFFECTING OUR BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP AND EVEN TO INSIST THAT ITS ROLE HAS BEEN ONE OF MODERATION. THE PLAIN FACT IS THAT THE ALGERIANS SAW IT MORE IN THEIR INTEREST TO OPPOSE SADAT, AND TO TRY TO BUILD SUPPORT FOR THEIR SAHARA POLICY, THAN TO STAY ON THE SIDELINES SHOULD SADAT'S INITIATIVES FAIL, THE GOA MAY CONCLUDE THAT
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REJECTIONISM PAYS AND MAY CONTINUE TO WORK AGAINST OUR MIDDLE EAST PEACE EFFORT.

B. TERRORISM: THE STATEMENT OF THE ALGERIAN EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON ON TERRORISM (STATE 017115 NOTAL) POINTS UP ONCE MORE THE DIVERGENCE IN AMERICAN AND ALGERIAN VIEWS ON THIS ISSUE. THE GOA, IT IS CLEAR, DOES NOT ACCEPT VARIOUS INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS ON TERRORISM BECAUSE THEY DO NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT SUCH ALGERIAN CONCERNS AS "STATE TERRORISM." AS TO THEIR OWN NATIONAL STANCE ON TERRORISM, THE ALGERIANS ARGUE THAT THEIR LAW AGAINST TERRORIST ACTS IS STRICT AND THAT THEY SHOULD NOT BE CRITICIZED FOR ACCEDING TO JAPANESE PLEAS IN THE JAL HIJACKING CASE. NO OTHER COUNTRY IN THE WORLD WITH AN AIRLINE, THEY CONTEND, WOULD HAVE RETURNED THE JRA TERRORISTS AND IN ANY CASE THE JAPANESE HAD EXONERATED THEM FROM ANY RESPONSIBILITY IN THIS REGARD. IT MAY BE THAT INTERNATIONAL DISAPPROVAL WILL STIFFEN ALGERIAN RESISTANCE TO ACCEPTING TERRORISTS IN THE FUTURE. HOWEVER, THE QUESTION WILL VERY LIKELY CONTINUE TO POSE PROBLEMS.

C. LNG CONTRACTS: THE NEW DELAY IN OUR DECISION ON THE EL PASO II AND TENNECO CONTRACTS HAS ALREADY BROUGHT AN ALGERIAN REACTION AND THEIR IRRITATION INCREASES WITH THE PASSAGE OF TIME. DISAPPROVAL OF THE CONTRACTS AS THEY NOW STAND WOULD, OF COURSE, TEND TO REDUCE OUR STANCE IN THIS COUNTRY FROM WHAT IT COULD OTHERWISE BECOME. ALSO, DISAPPROVAL WOULD ALMOST SURELY BE SEEN BY THE ALGERIANS AS A POLITICAL DECISION ON OUR PART.

D. OTHER ISSUES: IN ADDITION TO THE FOREGOING PROBLEMS, THE LIST OF OTHER ISSUES ON WHICH WE AND THE ALGERIANS DIFFER REMAINS LONG. ALGERIAN MILITANCY IN OPEC AND IN NIEO DISCUSSIONS HAS BEEN, AND WILL PROBABLY REMAIN, PARTICULARLY INIMICAL TO OUR INTERESTS.

9. PRESENT: AS THE FOREGOING SUGGESTS, THE PARADOXICAL NATURE OF OUR RELATIONSHIP HAS BEEN EVIDENT DURING MY TOUR HERE. AT THE BEGINNING OF THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION, BOTH SIDES CONCENTRATED ON BUILDING A NORMAL RELATIONSHIP, LARGELY AT ALGERIAN INITIATIVE AND
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DESPITE A WIDE DIVERGENCE IN INTERESTS AND VIEWS. IT WAS INEVITABLE THAT THESE DIFFERENCES SHOULD BEGIN TO SHOW ONCE MORE.

10. AT THE PRESENT TIME, THE ALGERIANS ARE SEEKING TO HAVE THEIR CAKE AND EAT IT TOO; THAT IS, TO MAINTAIN THE MUCH DESIRED NORMAL RELATIONSHIP WITH US EVEN AS THEY PURSUE POLICIES THEY KNOW TO BE INIMICAL TO OUR INTERESTS. THEY ARGUE THAT THEIR INTEREST IN THE MIDDLE EAST IS TO PLAY A MODERATING ROLE (ONE SEASONED DIPLOMAT NOTES WITH AMUSEMENT THAT IN THE COMPANY OF SUCH AS LIBYA AND IRAQ THE ONLY ROLE THE ALGERIANS COULD PLAY WOULD BE "MODERATE") AND TO UNIFY THE ARAB WORLD. THEY ALSO CONTEND THAT THEIR DIFFERENCES WITH FRANCE IN THE SAHARA HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH THE U.S. WHOSE NEUTRAL POSITION IN THE CONFLICT THEY ACCEPT AND RESPECT. THEY URGE US TO NOTE THAT OFFICIAL MEDIA ATTACKS ON US HAVE BEEN GREATLY TONED DOWN AND THAT THEY ARE ANXIOUS FOR GOOD RELATIONS GENERALLY. FURTHERMORE, THEY ACCEPTED OUR DEMARCHES ON THE FRENCH HOSTAGES UNEMOTIONALLY.

11. THIS ATTEMPT TO PAPER OVER OUR DIFFERENCES IS UNDERSTANDABLE. AT THE MOMENT, THIS REGIME IS FEELING INCREASINGLY ISOLATED AND DOES NOT NEED ANOTHER HOSTILE RELATIONSHIP. FRANCE HAS SHOWN ITSELF READY TO ACCEPT, INDEED ALMOST ENCOURAGE, A DETERIORATION IN ALGERIAN-FRENCH RELATIONS, AND THIS IS CAUSING THE ALGERIANS CONSIDERABLE DIFFICULTY, NOTABLY IN THE SAHARA. RELATIONS WITH SPAIN, ANOTHER KEY PLAYER IN THE SAHARA, ARE IN A MINOR CRISIS. BOUMEDIENE'S TRIP NOTWITHSTANDING, MOST OF THE ARAB WORLD SEEMS TO WANT TO STAY OUT OF THIS ONE AND THE AFRICANS RESENT ALGERIAN AGGRESSIVENESS AND CHAMELEON-LIKE ADOPTION OF AFRICAN "IDENTITY" WHEN THEY NEED THE OAU. EVEN TITO SHOWS RECENT SIGNS OF DIFFERING WITH HIS LONG-TIME BUDDY, BOUMEDIENE, ON RECOGNITION OF ISRAEL.

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12. ABOVE ALL, HOWEVER, IT IS THE ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIP WITH US THAT COUNTS HERE. ALTHOUGH WE CANNOT DOCUMENT IT, WE SENSE THAT THE ALGERIANS SEE A LINKAGE BETWEEN OUR OVERALL BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP AND FUTURE DOE ACTION ON THE EL PASO II AND TENNECO CONTRACTS. THEIR STAKE IN THESE AGREEMENTS IS HIGH, AND THEY ARE WILLING TO GO TO SOME LENGTHS TO PRESERVE IT.

13. THE FUTURE: AT THIS JUNCTURE, I SEE A POSSIBLE COINCIDENCE OF A NUMBER OF PROBLEMS WHICH COULD LEAD TO A SHARP DETERIORATION IN U.S.-ALGERIAN RELATIONS. IN ADDITION TO THE LNG, MIDDLE EAST AND TERRORISM QUESTIONS, WE ARE LIKELY TO FACE IN THE NEAR FUTURE THE POSTPONEMENT OF THE BOUMEDIENE VISIT, THE SALE TO MOROCCO OF U.S. ARMS FOR USE IN THE SAHARA, AND PERHAPS FURTHER SNAGS IN GETTING THE CULTURAL AGREEMENT SIGNED. DIFFICULTIES OR TENSION IN EACH OF THESE AREAS ARE OF VARYING SERIOUSNESS FOR OUR RELATIONSHIP; TAKEN SEPARATELY, I BELIEVE EACH COULD BE WORKED OUT. SHOULD WE HAVE CONFIDENTIAL

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TROUBLE WITH ALL THEM AT MORE OR LESS THE SAME TIME, OUR RELATIONS WILL FACE TOUGH SLEDDING.

14. GIVEN ALGERIA'S SEEMINGLY LIMITLESS PROPENSITY FOR OPPOSING OUR FOREIGN POLICY INTERESTS IN MANY AREAS, THERE IS A TENDENCY TO WRITE THIS COUNTRY OFF AND NOT TO CONSIDER THE U.S.-ALGERIAN RELATIONSHIP IN REACHING DECISIONS. OVER THE YEARS, ALGERIA HAS BEEN SINGLE-MINDED IN PURSUING WHAT IT PERCEIVES TO BE ITS RADICAL POLITICAL COURSE WITH LITTLE REGARD FOR HOW THIS PURSUIT HAS AFFECTED ITS RELATIONS WITH ITS MORE MODERATE COUNTERPARTS. RECENT EVENTS HAVE SHOWN THIS ATTITUDE LITTLE CHANGED. THERE IS THEREFORE SOME LOGIC IN ARGUING THAT, SINCE WE HAVE HAD LITTLE SUCCESS IN INFLUENCING THIS REGIME, WE SHOULD GO OUR OWN WAY AND NOT BE OVERLY CONCERNED BY WHAT AFFECT OUR ACTIONS MAY HAVE ON OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THIS COUNTRY. INDEED, ONE COULD CONTEND THAT THE TIME HAD COME TO TRY A TOUGHER APPROACH.

15. NOT SURPRISINGLY FOR ONE IN MY POSITION, I DO NOT ACCEPT THE FOREGOING. AS I SEE IT, THERE ARE THREE MAIN REASONS WHY WE SHOULD CONTINUE TO TAKE THE ALGERIAN CONNECTION INTO ACCOUNT IN CONDUCTING OUR FOREIGN POLICY.

A. AS WE, LIKE THE ALGERIANS, PURSUE OUR OWN INTERESTS, WE ARE LIKELY TO BE QUITE TOUGH ENOUGH. THE SALE OF MORE ARMS TO MOROCCO AND THE DISAPPROVAL OF THE EL PASO II AND TENNECO LNG CONTRACTS WOULD BRING IT HOME TO THE ALGERIANS THAT WE HAVE NO INTENTION OF CODDLING THEM.

B. AN APPARENT ABANDONMENT OF OUR PUSH TOWARD A "NORMAL" U.S.-ALGERIAN RELATIONSHIP WILL NOT CAUSE THE ALGERIANS TO MODIFY ANY POSITION THEY CONSIDER IMPORTANT. ON THE CONTRARY, THE HISTORY OF THIS COUNTRY SUGGESTS THAT THEY WILL ONLY MAGNIFY THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF ANY SUCH HOSTILITY, AND PERHAPS BECOME LESS RATIONAL AND MORE TROUBLESOME TO US IN THEIR APPROACH TO WORLD AFFAIRS THAN THEY ARE NOW. THUS, SHOULD THEY COME TO PERCEIVE US ONCE MORE AS HOSTILE, CONFIDENTIAL

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AND THEY DO NOT IN MY OPINION PERCEIVE US THAT WAY NOW, WE WOULD LOSE OUR ACCESS AND THE CHANCE FOR EXERTING A MODICUM OF INFLUENCE.

C. FINALLY, A TURN AWAY FROM ALGERIA WOULD DISCOURAGE AND WEAKEN THE SIGNIFICANT ELEMENT IN THIS SOCIETY THAT IS WELL DISPOSED TOWARDS US AND OUT OF SYMPATHY WITH THE REGIME'S RADICALISM. WHILE I AM NOT YET IN A POSITION TO BE VERY PRECISE, I HAVE BEEN STRUCK DURING MY BRIEF STAY IN THIS COUNTRY BY THE NUMBER, OUTSPOKENNESS, AND POTENTIAL INFLUENCE OF THE "CLOSET PRO-WESTERNERS" HERE. THESE PEOPLE ARE IN IMPORTANT POSITIONS IN GOVERNMENT AND THE PROFESSIONS AND HAVE A CERTAIN SAY IN HOW THINGS ARE DONE. THEY WILL, I EXPECT, MAKE THEIR INFLUENCE FELT DURING THE FLN CONGRESS TO BE HELD THIS SUMMER AND WILL BE IN A STRONGER POSITION IF THE COUNTRY THEY ADMIRE IS NOT BACK IN THEIR OWN REGIME'S DOG HOUSE.

16. THUS, I PREFER CONTINUING OUR PURSUIT OF A "NORMAL RELATIONSHIP". THIS REGIME HAS A NEED TO GET ON WITH US EVEN AS IT CONTINUES ON ITS OWN COURSE, AND SO LONG AS THE CHANNELS OF OFFICIAL COMMUNICATION REMAIN OPEN WE HAVE A CHANCE TO EXERT SOME CONSTRUCTIVE INFLUENCE. TO CLOSE THOSE CHANNELS IN THIS ENVIRONMENT WOULD BE TO DIMINISH THE EFFECTIVENESS OF AND NEED FOR OUR OFFICIAL PRESENCE IN ALGERIA. HAYNES

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